Oral History Interview
Fred Bollinger and Alice Bollinger
2002 Oral History Day
Interviewer unknown

Int. How did he get here?

Fred: That's what we'd like to know the only thing he ever told me was when he was at the Green River in Wyoming he worked for the railroad for a few days.

Int. Then you think he might have caught a ride?

Fred: Did they have rides in those days?

Int. Well freight train.

Fred He might have been on the train. I don't know

Int. And your mother?

Fred: She was born right here.

Int. Her name?

Alice: About over there about a half a mile.

Fred: No she wasn't born in that house.

Alice: But its right on the property.

Int. What's her name

Fred: Her father built that house but they never said she was born there. You know what it is don't you. two story house,

Int. with the big hedge?

Fred: No, corner of Mill Station and Dyer Lane. Cemetery is right there.

Int. What's your mother's name?

Fred: Ruth Ann Gregson

Int. So she's the link to the old family of Sonoma County.

Fred: Yes

Int. Any outlaws in your family. Any black sheep

Fred: No not that we know of.

Int. Do you have kids?

Fred: Not me I never got married.

Int. Oh you didn't

Alice: when he was in high school I always saw him sitting at the depot there is an archway where you can sit, look at the girls. He says I'm going to go up in the hills where there aren't no women.

Fred: I remember telling you that.

Alice: But his sister said she ...(comment about Laurie Horn, unintelligible) She liked Laurie, they were friends. There weren't that many people in the country those days, the country people who came in to town to school were a novelty. Laurie's brother and her husband were friends. Our sister in law's father in law., Frank Thomas and his boy Lawrence was the one going with my sister in law. and so Laurie had a brother named Bill and they were friends. I got married, they were friends we'd have picnics and get together.

Int. So was there much of a Mexican community when you moved here?

Fred; I was born in Mexico. No there wasn't much of a Mexican community. We were outlaws.

Alice: Neighbors were closer. A lot belonged to the same clubs. They were big in those days, They needed that sociability, they don't need it now.

Int. Did people go to church?

Alice/Fred: Oh yeah His mother was a preacher. When they had the church at Graton

Int. After you came here?

Alice: I was born in 1911 so about 1912 or 13 the Revolution got rough the rebels would come through wanting guns and money and if you didn't come up with the money..so they set the

canefield afire way out in the back so ....took the baby to the edge of the river but the flames would get to the edge of the roof and burn the roof. It was primitive. They sent me across the river to their friends. Somebody brought me over to see the baby about the second day I guess it was and I remember my dad looking way over there and seeing the smoke and he knew they set the sugar cane on fire. But the reason they did that too was they knew the guns were somewhere and they figured they were in the canefield, buried, but they didn't bury them quite deep enough so when the fire got to where the guns were they went off. My dad always kept two or three guns, American boys or part Indians from Oklahoma they had a property over the mountain aways from us and boys would come over and work for my dad. As long as there were two or three of them they didn't rough 'em up quite so much, but then my dad moved us to Tampico, seaport and we stayed there for awhile and it looked like it wasn't going to cool off, why, American counsel offered to take 'em anywhere in the United States if they wanted to go. They didn't want to get too far from the ranch, had 'em drop us off in Galveston and that's where I was about 4 then. and the next year I went to kindergarten and the kindergarten was a couple blocks away from this west end territory where we lived and I soon learned to speak English, being my dad spoke English I could go home and practice on him, so I never really had an accent.

Int. What about your mother?

Alice: Well she should have studied a bit because she was plenty smart when she was teaching me when I got in the first grade and we couldn't go to school in the first grade until you were seven years old and so I got to go to kindergarten two seasons or maybe three but anyhow I enjoyed it a lot because art work and drawing singing, maypole dancing and all that kind of stuff. I learned to speak real well before I got into first grade.

Int. You liked art then? Did you do art later?

Alice: No but they had pictures to paint and draw and crayons they give you a piece of paper and a pencil.

Int.: Why are you laughing Fred?

Fred: Oh I laugh all the time, I laughed my way all through high school when they had the 40th class reunion one of the teachers was there and said Fred you laughed your way all through school and you're still laughing. Mr. Irish.

Int. I think I remember when you went to that reunion, was that the recent one?

Fred: Oh we have one every year.

Int. You graduated in?

Fred: 1935

Int. I wasn't even a glimmer ..my dad was born in 1911, he's still living.
So you raised a family you had two girls, one of them you mentioned.

Alice: Helen Estabrook, three children, Ruth has two girls. The boy and youngest girl live in Placerville and Helen used to live there.

Int: Any of your grandchildren live here?

Alice: Her oldest daughter comes to my house five days a week from morning til night.

Int. And you're living in Sebastopol?

Alice: On High Street. We lived 30 years on Main Street and he commuted out to the ranch to work on the ranch.

Int. What did you do on the ranch?

Alice: We had apples

Int. Is that land still in apples?

Fred/Alice: No the man bought it and tried to run it for a couple years but he and his wife were steady and understood what was going on but when he saw he wasn't going to make it cause Fred ...dig into the backlog to pay the taxes it was driving him nuts and he wanted to get ride of it so I said to him well isn't anybody trying to buy a piece of ground in the paper he said there's an ad a man wants 100 acres and I said maybe he'd settle for less. Why don't you call him up? Ruth was in real estate by then just starting and that's my youngest daughter and so she called them and they were up the next day, them folks were already living here in Sebastopol I didn't know that. Anyway they liked the place real well because of a spring and lot of low land.

Int. Where is it located?

Alice: On Elphick Road, turn off and go about a mile and a half. Bollinger Lane is on the road. When they went name places they asked if they could name it Bollinger Lane. The most of the ranch was up on the hill, The new couple raised Christmas trees.

Int. Is that what it is now?

Alice: Deedler's bought it, Christmas trees were hard work. She kept working as a nurse but he divided it up.

Fred: Its still gonna be a Christmas tree farm.

Alice: I never did hear what he's going to do.

Int: As kids in Sebastopol what did you do for fun, Did you go to the theater?

Fred/Alice: Yes, movies.

Alice: We could come in from out there on the trolley to Sebastopol Sundays and matinees. Neighbors would haul you in if they knew you wanted to go to the show. Neighbors were helpful and friendly. Kinda looked after us/each other. On Volkerts Road my dad did odd jobs, he got a job, got a mule then he could plow small areas like a chicken yard they planted into barley for the chickens to eat for greens and then he raised kale and sold plants to them for chicken feed. You had a chopper you could grind them up like a mill or you could throw it in the yard and they would peck it til they ate it all. They wouldn't waste the stems why if they had a chopper they would chop it up and throw it in the yard for the chickens.

End of Interview